United Nations A/C.1/52/PV.6

General Assembly
Fifty-second session

Official Records

First Committee

6th Meeting
Thursday, 16 October 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Nkgowe . . . . . (Botswana)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda items 62 to 82 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Ulland (Norway): My delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. I can assure you of our support and cooperation.

A most important step during the past year has been the conclusion of a new convention banning a weapon which, even after the end of hostilities, has killed or maimed so many people during this century. The ban on anti-personnel mines is an important achievement both as a humanitarian and disarmament effort. Like many other States, Norway has long been gravely concerned by the suffering and casualties caused by these mines. They obstruct economic development and reconstruction, inhibit the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, and have other severe consequences for years after emplacement.

This concern was also reflected in resolution 51/45 S, adopted by the General Assembly at its last session, which urges Governments to "pursue vigorously" [para. 1] an international agreement to ban anti-personnel mines. One hundred and fifty-six countries committed themselves to that goal by supporting the resolution. It is remarkable that we have managed to meet the objectives set out in a United Nations resolution so quickly. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, successfully negotiated in Oslo in September, will serve as a practical tool in our efforts to end human suffering, and is a demonstration of what can be achieved through close cooperation between non-governmental organizations and Governments. We are most encouraged by the tremendous popular support for a total ban on anti-personnel mines. The momentum behind the Ottawa process has in itself been a universalizing factor. We are very pleased that this year's Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the campaign's coordinator, Jody Williams. The award is well deserved, and will provide an important impetus for the further efforts to gain universal support for the Convention.

The Convention sets out an unequivocal ban on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines, without exemptions, rights of reservation or transitional periods. Such an unequivocal commitment has been a priority for Norway since the beginning of the Ottawa process. Another important part of the Convention is the obligation to destroy or ensure the destruction of all stockpiled and emplaced anti-personnel mines within a certain time limit. The Convention also recognizes the enormous challenge faced by mine-affected countries in meeting the commitments under the Convention by providing a political framework for international assistance and technical cooperation in the field of mine clearance, stockpile destruction, and the mapping and marking of mine areas until they are cleared. The need for special attention to the victims of anti-personnel mines, from rehabilitation to effective long-term social and economic reintegration, has been recognized explicitly in the Convention. The needs

97-86242 (E)

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are enormous, and only a concerted approach can help those whose lives have been so tragically affected by the use of anti-personnel mines. The Norwegian Government is, subject to parliamentary approval, prepared to allocate $100 million over the next five years to mine clearance and to mine victim assistance.

The challenge facing us now is to make the Convention universal and to implement its humanitarian goals. This will be the second phase of the Ottawa process. We urge all States to sign and ratify the Convention as soon as possible. We also hope that States not yet in a position to do so at this stage will, as interim steps, take measures aimed at prohibiting, restricting or suspending the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

Together with the largest possible number of other States, we will this year sponsor a draft resolution inviting all States to sign and ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The operative paragraphs of the draft resolution focus on the signature and implementation of the Convention. We hope the draft resolution will attract the widest possible support among United Nations Member States.

The agreement between the United States of America and the Russian Federation during the Helsinki summit in March to embark on negotiations on reduced strategic arsenals beyond the parameters of START II is a welcome step in the right direction. This shows that the nuclear-weapon States are taking seriously their specific responsibility for nuclear disarmament as set out in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

We continue to stress the need for further reductions in tactical nuclear weapons, and for their destruction. We know that thousands of nuclear weapons have been withdrawn and put into storage. These weapons should be destroyed, not merely stored. It is important to ensure that this part of the disarmament process is also continued, as proposed in earlier unilateral declarations made by the United States of America and by the Russian Federation.

Several ideas have been put forward as to how we could best proceed on a broad scale in our efforts to address nuclear issues. We have noted with interest the report by the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, and consider its proposals and recommendations to be valuable in charting the course ahead. The Norwegian approach to the wider problems related to nuclear activities is based on the realization that there are potential risks of proliferation inherent in both military and civilian nuclear activities. In addition, we see challenges from the process of nuclear disarmament itself. The international disarmament agenda should, in our view, encompass a program for managing disarmament, including the secure and environmentally safe handling of material from weapons scheduled for destruction. As a response to the serious challenges posed by these activities, the Norwegian Government has drawn up a plan of action on nuclear activities and chemical weapons in areas adjacent to our northern borders. One priority area of this plan is the management, storage and disposal of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste. Our goal is, in cooperation with other interested States, to achieve safe, cost-effective operations under independent control and inspection, and in keeping with internationally accepted principles and guidelines.

The signing and adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) last year was a milestone in the annals of global disarmament. For the first time we now have a Treaty banning all kinds of nuclear test explosions. This Treaty will facilitate the further implementation of the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted at the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The conclusion of the CTBT, however, is not the end of the road. Nuclear proliferation will continue to be an important topic on the global multilateral disarmament agenda.

Negotiations on an agreement prohibiting the production of fissile material for weapons purposes should be the next priority item on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. After the conclusion of the CTBT, cut-off negotiations would be in accordance with the principles and objectives agreed at the NPT Review Conference in 1995. A cut-off agreement is an important means of reducing the availability of fissile material. We should work towards greater openness regarding the stocks of fissile material held by nuclear Powers. As a first step, the nuclear Powers could, on a voluntary basis, provide detailed information on their stocks of plutonium and highly enriched uranium. A second step could be to ensure cooperative measures to clarify and confirm those declarations. As a third step, the nuclear Powers could permit international inspections of their stocks, with the aim of ensuring that the inventory in storage can be taken out only for non-weapons purposes. As a fourth step, agreed monitored net reductions from these stockpiles could be introduced. In addition, consistent and stringent international standards of accounting and

security for fissile materials should be established. A programme along these lines was presented by Norway at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT Review Conference, and it is now part of the agenda for that Conference.

The efforts of the international community to rid the world of chemical weapons go back many years. Translating this long-standing commitment into a workable Treaty has taken generations, but the task was finally accomplished on 29 April this year, when the global ban on chemical weapons entered into force. By establishing an internationally agreed norm on chemical weapons and giving the international community the means to enforce it, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) represents a major step in the collective endeavour to eradicate weapons of mass destruction. We urge all States which have not yet done so, in particular those States in possession of chemical weapons, to sign the Convention and speed up their ratification process.

The process towards establishing a verification regime for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction is slowly moving in the right direction. The work in the Ad Hoc Group has become more comprehensive and focused, with the consolidation of a basis for the negotiations. If we spend 11 weeks of negotiations in the Ad Hoc Group next year in an efficient way, it should be possible to present a proposal for a verification protocol by the end of 1998. We accept that verification of the Biological Weapons Convention is more difficult than for other weapons of mass destruction, due to the very nature of biological weapons. However, we believe that sensible measures to secure compliance and to prevent non-compliance with the Convention can be established with the necessary goodwill and a pragmatic approach by all parties.

Our security agenda is more complex than ever before. Future security depends on a mixture of regional and global initiatives and measures, and the Conference on Disarmament bears the main responsibility for the global part of this equation. We are all interested in seeing this forum serve as an effective instrument in the field of global disarmament. However, 1997 has not been one of the Conference on Disarmament's most productive years. There are certainly a number of political reasons for this impasse. At the same time, we strongly feel that there is a fundamental need to reform the Conference on Disarmament as an institution. Most important, it can no longer be justified that countries are excluded from its membership. This could have an adverse effect on the Conference on Disarmament's relevance and credibility, and, ultimately, possibly even on its survivability.

Mr. N'Dry (Côte d'Ivoire) (*interpretation from French*): At the outset I should like, on behalf of the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We also extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau, and to your predecessor, Ambassador Alyaksandr Sychou, Permanent Representative of Belarus.

Since the end of the cold war significant positive changes have taken place in international relations. The most important progress has, without doubt, taken place in the field of disarmament. We have witnessed, *inter alia*, the indefinite extension in 1995 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the signing in 1996 of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the entry into force on 29 April 1997 of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Bodies have been created in order to ensure better implementation of the main provisions of these international instruments. In this context, my delegation is pleased that work has started in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, whose headquarters are in The Hague, and in the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, based in Vienna.

Furthermore, the successive creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones — in Latin America and the Caribbean, through the Treaty of Tlatelolco; in the South Pacific, through the Treaty of Rarotonga; and in Africa, through the Treaty of Pelindaba — are encouraging signs that we are moving towards a completely denuclearized world, for which we all fervently hope.

It is reassuring to note that the United Nations is at the heart of all these developments. Multilateralism is increasingly the order of the day in the field of disarmament and agreements on the reduction or elimination of weapons are no longer the preserve of the great military powers as in the past.

In this regard, my delegation would like to express its satisfaction at the Secretary-General's decision to set up, within the framework of the reform of the United Nations, a Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation headed by an Under-Secretary-General. As we see it, this

decision is fully justified in view of the new tasks that the United Nations has to deal with in the area of disarmament.

While there is reason to be pleased at the progress I have just outlined, we must, however, recognize that much remains to be done to establish greater collective security. In this respect, my delegation is pleased to note that the international community is increasingly concerned at the danger posed by landmines.

According to documents of the United Nations and certain non-governmental organizations, the anti-personnel landmines scattered over more than 70 countries kill or mutilate some 26,000 persons a year, 500 each week, or one person every 20 minutes. It is estimated that 30 million landmines are buried under African soil, which is 27 per cent of the 110 million mines planted around the world.

The presence of these devices makes it impossible to return to normal life, even long after a conflict has ended, and slows down the economic recovery of the infested territories. A political leader from a Western country quite rightly said recently that the dissemination of mines throughout the world was a war without end. Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the adoption in Oslo last September of an international Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction.

In thanking the initiators of this project for this noble enterprise, my delegation is pleased to announce that it will be joining the countries that intend to sign this Convention in December in Ottawa. My country hopes that the States that have not endorsed the Oslo decision will be able to do so in the very near future.

The awarding of this year's Nobel Prize for Peace to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines will undoubtedly contribute to a greater awareness on the part of the international community of the need to eliminate the danger caused by this type of weapon once and for all.

Africa south of the Sahara as a whole, and the West African subregion in particular, is experiencing a phenomenon of insecurity characterized by the dissemination of illegal small arms that, in both urban centres and rural areas, promote large-scale banditry, the formation of armed groups and a trend toward widespread self-defence on the part of populations whose security is threatened.

This phenomenon is threatening the fledgling democracies in the subregion and is also a source of instability in other, different regions of the world.

It is gratifying to note that the international community is now concerned at this scourge. In this respect, we welcome the recently developed cooperation between the United Nations and the Republic of Mali and also with some other States of the West African subregion, including my own, with a view to determining the magnitude of the phenomenon of the illicit circulation of small arms and how to end it.

My delegation also commends the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms for the excellent report [A/52/298] it has produced and which has been submitted to us by the Secretary-General.

Côte d'Ivoire, as one of the sponsors of resolution 50/70 B which requested the Secretary-General to draw up this report, endorses and supports the report's recommendations and, in particular, paragraph 80 (k), in which the Panel of Governmental Experts suggests that the United Nations should consider the possibility of convening a international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects in order to pursue the issues highlighted in that document.

In the same context, my delegation would like to reiterate the appeal it made during the general debate at this session of the General Assembly to the United Nations to organize a regional conference, in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to look into the illicit circulation of small arms in the West African subregion, in accordance with resolution 51/45 L.

It is now acknowledged that the best way of ensuring peace is still conflict prevention through a concerted international security policy. My country intends to become further involved in this approach and this is why the Head of State of Côte d'Ivoire, President Henri Konan Bédié, recently stipulated that Côte d'Ivoire's armed forces can henceforth participate in peacekeeping operations, *inter alia*, in the framework of an African interposition force, for which there is now an undeniable need.

West Africa, thanks to the experience gained in the settlement of the Liberian conflict, could easily, in the view of my delegation, form a subregional peace force which would bring together elements of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and those of the Agreement on Non-

Aggression and Assistance in Matters of Defence (ANAD), which includes Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger, Mali, Mauritania and Togo. This subregional peace force would be organized in pre-established tactical or logistical modules in a state of operational readiness on their respective territories and able to act at short notice at the request of ECOWAS, the OAU or the United Nations.

The end of ideological confrontation between the two blocs and the progress achieved with various initiatives in recent years in the field of disarmament have legitimately raised the hope that the resources previously devoted to military purposes would be redirected towards socio-economic development and environmental protection.

This view of the matter, unfortunately, has not yet been universally accepted. However, Côte d'Ivoire hopes that, sooner or later, the world will move in this direction and we are convinced that the United Nations can contribute greatly to this process.

Mr. Pham Quang Vinh (Viet Nam): May I first extend to you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau the warmest congratulations of the delegation of Viet Nam. We are confident that under your able guidance, this Committee will discharge effectively the heavy workload entrusted to it. In this connection, I would like to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in bringing the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion.

The end of the cold war, with the danger of a new nuclear holocaust driven further away, has opened up new opportunities for cooperation, including that in the field of disarmament. We welcome the progress recently achieved in this field, notably the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); subsequently, the entry into force this year of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) banning a whole category of weapons of mass destruction; and also the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which adopted by consensus the important decisions on "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament" and on "Strengthening the review process for the Treaty".

Also to be highlighted among the progress made is the emergence and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, such as those established by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok. We share the belief that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region contributes positively to the enhancement of international peace and security. In this regard, the efforts of the non-nuclear-weapon States need to be supported by the international community, in particular the nuclear-weapon States.

We support the approach of building a southern hemisphere free from nuclear weapons, starting from the basis of the achievements of the establishment of the existing zones.

In our region the South-east Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, the Bangkok Treaty, has entered into force. This is an important step. We express our hope that the nuclear-weapon States will soon extend their recognition to the Treaty and sign its Protocol in order to strengthen the power of the Treaty, thus contributing to the enhancement of peace and security in the region and in the world.

While welcoming the progress made, we recognize also that much remains yet to be done. The end of the cold war has made it even more clearly unjustifiable to maintain arsenals of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, let alone to maintain them to such a large extent as is currently the case. Rather, it has underlined the greater need to do away with those types of horrible weapons altogether as well as the possibility of doing so. We believe that the concept of deterrence based on nuclear superiority must be made irrelevant for all time as it already evidently is in today's world.

It is the consistent position of Viet Nam to stand firmly for the total elimination of nuclear weapons — the sooner the better. We shall therefore continue to support all efforts leading towards nuclear disarmament and the attainment of a world free from nuclear weapons. Political will and determination must be shown by the nuclear-weapon States, especially to realize the legal commitment made under article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) for nuclear disarmament. In this regard, we fully support the historic opinion of the International Court of Justice that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament.

While the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is yet to take effect, the cessation of all tests must be maintained, and further measures need to be agreed upon and taken to make the ban on nuclear tests truly comprehensive.

In April this year the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference in the year 2000 met for the first

time and started the strengthening review process of the Treaty. In this context, we urge that greater, constructive efforts be made in the upcoming Preparatory Committee meetings to ensure the success of the Conference and, more important, to fulfil all obligations under the Treaty as well as the commitments made by consensus and set out in the documents of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. The obligation for nuclear disarmament must be incorporated in this process.

Viet Nam has joined other countries in putting forward the 28-State proposal for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons. We further renew our support for the establishment by the Conference on Disarmament of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

My delegation supports the important role played by the United Nations and multilateral mechanisms in the common endeavour for international security and disarmament. Their role should be strengthened on the basis of their respective agreed mandates and priorities.

With regard to the reform of the United Nations, my delegation supports the efforts of the Secretary-General and will make our observations and contributions, including those related to disarmament, at the on-going consultation process in the plenary. My delegation shares the belief expressed by the Secretary-General that the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific continues to serve as a useful instrument for fostering a climate of cooperation and disarmament in the region. We therefore commend the efforts made by the Director of the Centre.

The continued impasse at the Conference on Disarmament is of concern, as it risks downgrading the role of the Conference as the sole multilateral negotiating mechanism on disarmament. We therefore call for greater efforts to be made to enable the work of the Conference and the related negotiations to move forward.

Viet Nam shares the grave concern over the consequences of the indiscriminate use of landmines. Having been a victim of landmines, we recognize the gravity of the related problems and deeply understand the tragedy in terms of both human and material losses. We therefore fully support the strict prohibition on the indiscriminate use of landmines and the moratorium on their export. We view mine clearance, assistance in demining and humanitarian assistance as matters of great importance, and call for greater efforts in this regard.

In addressing the issue of landmines, we should at the same time recognize that the central issue is the indiscriminate nature of their use. With regard to the defensive use of these devices for the sole purpose of protecting national sovereignty and territorial integrity, we concur with the views expressed in the ministerial communiqué of the Non-Aligned Movement of 25 September 1997, which underlined that any negotiations or agreements thereon should take into account the legitimate security concerns of States as well as their legitimate rights under the Charter of the United Nations.

The question of international security and disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, continues to be high on the agenda of the international community and that of the United Nations. The world can feel secure only when lasting peace is established, with that peace being constructed on an equitable basis and security being ensured for all States, especially small and non-nuclear-weapon States. This calls also for freeing our world of all nuclear weapons urgently.

In view of the new circumstances of the world situation, my delegation supports the early convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in order to build upon the historic achievements recorded at the first special session, as well as other important achievements recorded thereafter.

Mr. Ayadi (Algeria) *(interpretation from French)*: It is with great pleasure and a feeling of great pride, Sir, that I see you preside over this important Committee, whose work I am sure you will conduct to the satisfaction of all. I should like to take this opportunity to express to you and to the other officers of the Committee the warmest congratulations of the delegation of Algeria, which assures you of our complete cooperation for the success of our work.

I should also like to pay a tribute to our colleague, Ambassador Sychou of Belarus, for the remarkable manner in which he conducted the work of the Committee at the last session.

If there has ever been an area of international relations in which historical developments have produced noteworthy progress and opened the door to important initiatives, it is that of disarmament. Each day new proposals are formulated to reduce the existing potential for destruction and thereby to try to remove the spectre of a flare-up for which all humanity would have to pay the price.

In addition to the bilateral measures taken in that framework, particularly this year, with the forthcoming opening of START III negotiations once START II has been ratified, I note with satisfaction the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention in April 1997 and the establishment of its Organization and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. We also commend the results achieved at the first session of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Preparatory Committee, even though they fall short of our expectations, as well as the holding of the Oslo Diplomatic Conference on the banning of anti-personnel landmines, which brought together more than a hundred countries, my own among them.

It is comforting to note that, notwithstanding the scant progress registered this year in the Conference on Disarmament, multilateral work on disarmament has not only complemented bilateral efforts but has also become essential by lending universality to any initiative and thereby ensuring full respect for agreements and treaties in this sphere and thus their success. We continue to believe that bilateral and multilateral approaches should complement each other and coalesce in a search for effectiveness, since responsibilities, like risks, are shared.

General and complete disarmament is now a universal need, and it should be perceived in its original terms, namely, that there is not nor can there be any alternative to the achievement of true nuclear disarmament, which alone can free mankind from apocalypse, ensure security for all and channel nuclear energy to economic and social development by using it exclusively for peaceful means.

In this connection, and without taking away from steps that have already been or are being taken, we feel that further efforts are needed to promote the emergence of a new approach through the adoption of meaningful measures of nuclear disarmament, which incontrovertibly remains the absolute priority in achieving the goal of general and complete disarmament which the international community set for itself at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

In that framework, the proposal of the Group of 21 to establish a special committee to develop a timetable for the phased reduction of nuclear weapons deserves serious and perhaps more determined consideration that will finally ensure a successful outcome to negotiations on the elimination of nuclear weapons. Now that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has been signed by more than 140 countries, nothing stands in the way of our negotiating together, within the Conference on Disarmament, a timetable, albeit provisional, for a phased and ultimately complete process of nuclear disarmament.

In addition, the halting of the production of fissile materials must be combined with other related measures to enable the disarmament process to have real substance and to proceed effectively towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. One such measure would be the prohibition of the use or threat of use of such weapons in any circumstances against non-nuclear-weapon States. However, such assurances cannot be fully effective if they are not contained in a legal instrument binding on all the nuclear Powers.

The four nuclear-weapon-free zone Treaties — the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok — today cover more than a hundred countries. That shows the progress achieved in this sphere. In this connection, my delegation welcomes the efforts being made by Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

At the crossroads of Africa and the Middle East, Algeria long ago committed itself to work to make both those regions free of nuclear weapons. Although Africa managed to achieve that goal in April 1996, all the indications are that in the Middle East, unfortunately, notwithstanding the unequivocal commitment of the international community, such a result is still a long way off, owing to the attitude of Israel, the only State in the region that is not a party to the NPT and that continues to possess nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction outside any international control.

In a world endeavouring to effect qualitative changes in international relations, while progress in science and technology is constantly increasing man's control over nature, the atom should be used exclusively for our well-being. No obstacle should stand in the way of the promotion of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in economic development.

In this connection, strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of the safeguards system, aside from being a means to create confidence among States, gives an impetus to technology transfers needed for the scientific, economic and social advance of developing countries.

Given its basic choices, Algeria has elected to foster research into the peaceful use of nuclear energy in various social and economic spheres. The quality and level of

relations Algeria has developed in this connection in recent years with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), both in the area of bringing its two experimental and radioisotope-producing nuclear reactors into the safeguards regime and in the area of technological assistance and cooperation, clearly illustrate my country's decisive commitment to the Agency's objectives and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

With regard to disarmament, Algeria, the country in its geographical area that devotes the smallest percentage of its gross national product to national defence, fully endorses the basic right of security for all States, whose promotion necessarily entails, first, nuclear disarmament, followed by the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction and ending with the progressive and balanced reduction of conventional weapons at both the global and regional levels.

In this connection, we feel that the international community should deal with conventional weapons just as it deals with other types of weapons, especially when such weapons, through illicit trafficking, are being supplied to terrorist networks whose goals are to destabilize States, undermine democratic values and terrorize civilian populations.

Given the serious threat that international terrorism poses to the security and stability of many countries, and because of its international ramifications and the complicity it enjoys in waging its campaign of death and destruction, the only effective response to this scourge is the effective and dedicated cooperation of the whole international community in dismantling and neutralizing those networks of logistical support that are supplying terrorist groups in their deadly work, especially with regard to the supply of weapons.

The prevailing notion of international security, viewed as an island of economic prosperity in a sea of economic uncertainty, instability and insecurity, has shown its limitations, as it contains much uncertainty and, above all, involves considerable danger. Without lasting peace and security for the benefit of all, will not such an imbalance between countries on a single planet inevitably subject every region of the world to threats and uncertainties?

Today, it has become imperative to undertake a review of the question of security through a multidimensional approach in which the military aspect is addressed along with other priorities, particularly those of economic and social development. This approach would simultaneously and equally encompass all the new challenges and transnational threats which confront the international community.

It is also natural for Algeria to plead for a global and integrated approach to the security and development of the Mediterranean, convinced as it is that there can be no genuine security for all as long as serious and intolerable imbalances persist between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean.

The Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean process, initiated two years ago, is aimed precisely at promoting a renewed Mediterranean order that can consolidate stability and prosperity, fostering the democratic processes and economic reforms undertaken by numerous countries of the region, and achieving a partnership based on a balance of interests and a respect for differences. The last meeting of the Mediterranean Forum, held in July 1997 at Algiers, stemmed from the same objective.

Through the proposals on disarmament that have been submitted to the Member States, the Secretary-General has again confirmed the central role that the United Nations will have to play in the universal promotion of peace and security on the basis of full respect for the Charter's purposes and principles. We therefore note with interest the initiative taken by the Secretary-General to reconstitute the Centre for Disarmament as the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation. This decision, however, requires clarification as to the Department's functions, particularly with regard to defining priorities. In this connection, document A/C.1/52/CRP.3, which was distributed yesterday, unfortunately responded only partially to this.

For my country, nuclear disarmament is and must remain the absolute priority, as enshrined in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. That instrument will remain relevant and valid until the General Assembly decides otherwise.

My delegation would also like to underline that the transfer of the activities formerly dealt with by the Centre for Disarmament should not affect the activities of the Conference on Disarmament, which in Algeria's opinion continues to be the sole multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament.

The other body which my delegation will continue to support firmly is the Disarmament Commission, a deliberative body of the General Assembly entrusted with

the review of disarmament and arms control issues, which should continue to be the forum for democratic debate and exchange of views, as it has always been, precisely because it is a body open to the participation of all the Member States of the Organization.

The encouraging results achieved by the Commission at its 1997 substantive session have confirmed, among other things, the considerable contribution it can make in advancing the cause of disarmament. Nevertheless, my delegation is prepared to review and consider any proposal aimed at improving its working methods and procedures.

We continue to think that the First Committee should focus its attention on the disarmament and international security issues on its agenda. While progress has been made in the rationalization of its work, we should still make further efforts to improve those results. My delegation is open to any proposal that is introduced to that end. While it is prepared to consider the question of a thematic debate, whose utility has yet to be proven in the light of recent sessions, my delegation nevertheless continues to believe that it would be difficult to accept the idea of adding other matters to the agenda that have no bearing on the subject matter already addressed.

With respect to the selection of topics for committees, as requested in paragraph 42 of the Secretary-General's report (A/51/950), we find this difficult to put into practice since the differences of opinion are so great in the area of disarmament, as is amply borne out by the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on its own agenda.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): My delegation would first like to extend its warmest congratulations on your assumption, Sir, of the chairmanship of the First Committee. We have every confidence that under your able leadership this Committee will make great progress on the important issues on its agenda. On a more personal note, I am indeed very happy to see you in the Chair, as the Republic of Korea and Botswana cooperated so closely in the Security Council during your membership.

I also wish to express my appreciation to Ambassador Sychou of the Republic of Belarus, former Chairman of the First Committee, for his outstanding performance during the previous session.

Since the demise of the cold war, we have witnessed a series of monumental achievements in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament, including the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the successful conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the establishment and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world. Also encouraging has been the progress towards eliminating complete categories of weapons of mass destruction, through the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the ongoing efforts to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention.

We are pleased to note the successful launch earlier this year of a new, institutionalized review process of the NPT. The first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference has laid a strong foundation for further progress during its second session. My delegation hopes that future preparatory committees can continue their meaningful work and lead to a successful Review Conference in the year 2000. In particular, we hope that agreement can be reached on a realistic, step-by-step approach to implementing Article VI of the NPT.

The successful conclusion of the CTBT last year gave new momentum to the campaign against nuclear proliferation by ending nuclear-test explosions once and for all. In this regard, we welcome the establishment earlier this year of a Provisional Technical Secretariat for the CTBT Organization, as well as the progress made to date in the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

However, the objectives of the CTBT cannot be fully realized without the broad participation of all States in the Treaty. As an original signatory to the CTBT, we urge all States which have not yet joined the Treaty — particularly those whose ratification is necessary for the Treaty to come into force — to do so as soon as possible.

Regarding the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, we welcome the adoption of a Model Protocol for Part II measures of Programme 93+2 this year. The new Protocol is sure to strengthen the non-proliferation regime by improving the Agency's ability to verify the compliance of States parties to the NPT with their non-proliferation commitments. I would also like to take this opportunity to reaffirm Korea's strong support for Programme 93+2. We are working actively towards the implementation of the Programme and urge all other States to do the same.

My delegation is of the view that nuclear-weapon-free zones can be an effective instrument for promoting nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and confidence-building,

and thus help to enhance peace and security at the regional and global levels. We therefore welcome the recent establishment and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions. We also hope that current efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions, including Central Asia, can produce results satisfactory to the parties concerned.

On the Korean peninsula, there has been progress in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue in the context of the 1994 Agreed Framework between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The ground-breaking ceremony for the light-water reactor project in North Korea last August under the auspices of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization signalled that the Agreed Framework has now entered the implementation stage.

Despite this positive development, my delegation wishes to emphasize here once again that the North Korean nuclear issue can ultimately be resolved only when North Korea complies fully with its safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as with the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which the two sides of Korea agreed to implement when they brought it into force in February 1992.

The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the establishment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) are critically important milestones in the international community's journey towards phasing out one of the most gruesome categories of weapons of mass destruction. We welcome the OPCW's launch of verification activities in accordance with the Convention's requirements.

The Government of the Republic of Korea ratified the Convention before its entry into force. As such, we have been fully implementing our obligations under the Convention and will continue to do our part for its overall effectiveness. We are deeply concerned, however, that some States which are considered to possess chemical weapons, including North Korea, continue to refuse to join the chemical weapons non-proliferation regime. My delegation is convinced that universal adherence is essential to the Convention's full realization and implementation, and we strongly urge those countries which have not yet acceded to the Convention to do so without further delay. We also call on all States Parties to faithfully fulfil their obligations under the Convention and support the activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Another pressing need is to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Convention (BWC), designed to prohibit the entire awful array of biological weapons. My Government, for its part, has been a strong supporter of the international community's efforts to adopt verification measures to strengthen the Convention. We are pleased to note that the Ad Hoc Group meeting of States Parties to the BWC has made some progress in this regard. We hope that the determined work of the Ad Hoc Group will be able to produce a legally binding instrument to strengthen the Convention as soon as possible.

My Government has welcomed the opportunity to participate in the implementation of the recommendations of the Third Review Conference and has provided the Secretary-General with all relevant information and data. We believe that the exchange of information in conformity with standardized procedures is a valuable confidence-building measure and we therefore call on all States Parties to the Convention to participate in this important exercise.

A further destabilizing threat to international peace and security is the excessive accumulation of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, at a level beyond that which is considered legitimate for self-defence purposes. In this regard, my delegation shares the view that the international community should also focus its attention on conventional disarmament and transparency in armaments.

We regard the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as an effective means to reduce possible mistrust, miscalculation and military tension, and to promote confidence-building among States. However, in order for the Register to be truly effective, universal participation is critical. In this context, my delegation urges those countries which are not yet participants in the Register to join it as soon as possible. We also encourage the opening of regional discussions on the operation and development of the Register as a means of initiating the confidence-building process at the regional level.

With regard to curbing the illicit trafficking of conventional weapons — one of the most immediate problems we must address — my delegation is pleased to note that the guidelines for international arms transfers, which were concluded at the Disarmament Commission last year, will serve as a code of conduct to enhance

transparency in international arms transfers and to eradicate the illicit transfer of arms.

In order for the guidelines to be successful, however, each country needs to enact adequate national legislation or regulations and to adopt relevant administrative procedures so as to firmly account for and control arms and the export and import of arms.

My Government shares the view that the proliferation of anti-personnel landmines and their indiscriminate and irresponsible use have inflicted a vast amount of needless harm and suffering, especially on civilians. Korea has therefore been an active participant in the international community's efforts to minimize and contain the tragic consequences of these weapons. In this context, my Government has decided to extend for an indefinite period its moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines and has made a financial contribution to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance.

As we all know, in recent months, there has been a determined effort to establish a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. Any effort to curtail the deployment of landmines, however, should take into account legitimate concerns of national security. For my country in particular, where much of our population lives within shelling range of the most militarized border in the world, a total ban on anti-personnel mines would actually increase, rather than reduce, the possibility of civilian death and injury by diminishing the effectiveness of military deterrence against a recurrence of war.

In this regard, while we support the spirit of the international convention on a total ban on anti-personnel landmines recently adopted in Oslo, we regret that it does not duly take into account the legitimate security concerns of the Republic of Korea.

The Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, has done much to advance progress in the field of disarmament by fostering agreement on numerous major disarmament treaties. This year, unfortunately, the divergence of views among member States on what priority to place on the issues to be deliberated prevented the Conference on Disarmament from making tangible progress on the key issues.

We hope that member States will be able to show greater flexibility and willingness to compromise so that, next year, the deliberations of the Conference on outstanding issues can produce substantive progress. In particular, we wish to call for the immediate commencement of negotiations on the cut-off treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, starting at the next session of the Conference on Disarmament.

Global and regional approaches to disarmament complement each other and should therefore be pursued in tandem with efforts to promote peace and security at the regional and international levels. In this regard, my Government supports the promotion of confidence-building measures as a means of easing tensions and furthering disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation at the regional and subregional levels.

In this context, in 1994 my Government proposed the Northeast Asia Security Dialogue as a vehicle for reducing tension and improving the security environment in North-East Asia through confidence-building measures among the six countries concerned, namely, the two Koreas, China, Japan, the Russian Federation and the United States. It is our sincere hope that a favourable response will be forthcoming from the countries concerned.

With regard to regional approaches to disarmament, we recognize that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific has contributed to strengthening regional disarmament efforts, and hope that it will continue to promote regional security dialogue through its activities.

Since the end of the cold war, disarmament has assumed greater prominence on the agenda of the international community. There are great expectations of the positive role that the United Nations can play in advancing non-proliferation and disarmament, as it has done in recent years. In this regard, my delegation regards the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament as most timely and appropriate, and supports in principle his proposal to establish a new Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation. However, we believe that the mandate of a new department should be defined in such a way as to avoid duplication of efforts with other disarmament machinery. Member States as well must shoulder greater responsibility for building a world free of weapons, so that future generations can live their lives completely free from the scourge of war.

In closing, I assure you, Sir, that you may count on the full support of my delegation as you guide this

Committee's consideration of the challenging issues that lie ahead of us.

Mr. Saliba (Malta): May I first of all congratulate you, Sir, on your unanimous election to the Chair of this important Committee. Your experience and skill augur well for a successful outcome of this Committee's work. Our thanks also goes to your predecessor, who with vigour and determination executed the work of this Committee to bring it to a successful conclusion.

Disarmament and international security lie at the heart of this Organization's work. Efforts towards the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction have been the subject of lengthy debate and careful negotiation. Recent years have seen progress in a number of disarmament fields. We have witnessed the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as well as the strengthening of its review process. The NPT remains a cornerstone in the non-proliferation regime. Progress towards the universality of the Treaty continues. Malta urges those States that are not yet parties to the Treaty to accede at the earliest possible date and to conclude safeguards with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In addition, treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones are on the rise and reinforce the wider non-proliferation efforts on a regional basis. In 1996 two new treaties were signed with a view to establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa and South-East Asia. We welcome these treaties and support efforts for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

The adoption in 1996 of a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and more recently the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the establishment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) demonstrate the commitment of the international community to curb the spread of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. As a member State of the OPCW as well as of the Executive Council, Malta will continue to work assiduously with other member States with a view to strengthening the OPCW and to contributing towards the full implementation of the Convention and its universality.

In May this year agreement was reached on a model protocol for the implementation of measures of the IAEA's Programme 93+2, which will enhance the capability of the IAEA to detect undeclared nuclear activities. The measures and decisions taken by the Agency to maintain and strengthen the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the safeguards system are indeed welcome by Malta.

All these steps, taken individually or collectively, are landmarks on the long road towards a nuclear-weapon-free world in which nations will harmoniously exist in a stable peace

> "where war is thought to be unlikely not because of mutual fear but because of mutual satisfaction with the prevailing situation". [*Stable Peace*, by Kenneth Boulding]

Last month the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency approved Malta's application for membership of the IAEA. Malta's accession to the Agency is a further demonstration of my Government's commitment to policies that oppose and prohibit the production, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We believe that membership of the Agency will enhance Malta's role in and contribution to security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, particularly in the field of nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear export controls constitute an important feature in the efforts to stem the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We encourage all countries exporting nuclear material to accept the guidelines for nuclear exports, as set out in the IAEA's information circular INFCIRC/254, and to supplement this by establishing effective national mechanisms for export control. Export controls and, in particular, the control of material and equipment that can be used for dual purposes are matters to which the Government of Malta attaches increasing importance. Far from being seen as a restriction on trade, such controls should be viewed as a means to further enhance security measures related to such materials. We believe that an exchange of adequate information is essential for the insight it will provide into areas of potential concern, and that regular consultation will help restrict exports that could contribute to the acquisition of nuclear weapons by non-nuclear-weapon States.

In this respect, allow me to express to the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States our appreciation for sharing with Maltese officials their respective expertise in this field. After all, the control of the international illicit trade in arms and the prevention of nuclear terrorism are two areas where countries simply cannot operate in isolation.

While the pursuit of nuclear disarmament remains one of the international community's top priorities, the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction, equally devastating in their destructive capabilities, remains high on our agenda. In the same way as we have welcomed the IAEA's strengthened safeguards system, we look forward to the finalization of a verification protocol on the Biological Weapons Convention, and urge the start of negotiations on a cut-off treaty on fissile material. Of equal importance to my delegation is the sense of urgency required in achieving universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization has recently concluded its third meeting. Since starting its work in March this year, the Preparatory Commission has initiated activities to establish the global verification regime foreseen in the Treaty so that it will be operational by the time the Treaty enters into force. This should include a worldwide network of monitoring stations, an international data centre and on-site inspections. We are encouraged by the progress achieved so far.

A few small steps can, in most cases, yield the same benefit as one larger step, but only if they are taken in the same direction. My delegation believes that a few small but important steps have been taken in the direction of greater transparency in armaments through the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms; standardized reporting on military expenditure; and objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures. We believe that each of these steps will further enhance confidence and trust between States.

Other practical disarmament measures, such as those envisaged in General Assembly resolution 51/45 N, "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures", and its follow-up draft resolution this year, will help to promote a culture of peace both within and beyond national boundaries. Our commitment to further intensification of the efforts to buttress such measures shows our belief in the need for a continued focus on enhancing transparency in armaments. This is one of the items to which Malta attaches great importance.

The attention which we, as States, give to the question of disarmament stems not only from broader concerns about national, regional and international security, but also from a will to end the suffering brought to civilians and innocent people which fall victim to the scourge of such devices as anti-personnel landmines. Malta has been foremost in support for the initiatives taken towards the elimination of the production, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines. The Ottowa process is a commendable initiative in this direction. Malta looks forward to the opening for signature of its Treaty at the end of this year.

Of equal importance is the question of the illicit transfer of conventional weapons and their link to destabilizing forces such as terrorism, drug trafficking and money laundering. The report presented by the Group of Governmental Experts and the recommendations contained therein have our full support. We will be supportive of any effort that continues to seek consensus on this important matter.

Allow me to say a few words about this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament. As the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the Conference on Disarmament has the central role of furthering discussion on all aspects of disarmament issues that aim towards concrete agreements and treaties among States.

This year's session of the Conference has been a disappointment, with no substantial progress whatsoever. Malta looks forward to substantive progress during next year's session on items such as the improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament. We also look forward to early agreement on the establishment and commencement of negotiations under those already identified by the Ad Hoc Committees concerning various pending items on the Conference's agenda and programme of work. It is therefore essential that during the inter-sessional period we take the opportunity to continue consultations with a view to elaborating and formulating decisions for submission and adoption at the commencement of the 1998 Conference on Disarmament session.

Securing peace through regional efforts, we believe, can contribute to enhancing and consolidating wider international security and stability objectives. It is through a commitment to build confidence in our region that Malta views the Mediterranean area. Within the context of the Helsinki Final Act of the then Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the link between the security and stability of the Mediterranean and that of Europe was recognized. Since then, Malta has been keen to further develop this interregional approach to security and stability in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

The recent meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Euro-Mediterranean area, held in Malta last April, has led to further advances in the field of confidence- and security-building measures. Serious and effective follow-up to its conclusions will form the basis for future development in this field, as it, hopefully, will for other matters addressed by the Conference. As my Prime Minister has said,

> "The Malta Conference reiterated that the serious and deep-seated problems of our region need to be tackled through a process of dialogue and common action, extending over a period of time and covering a whole range of interrelated issues. It is Malta's conviction that this process has generated a political commitment that will effectively contribute to the removal of the misperceptions and prejudice that still exist in the region." [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings, 13th meeting, p. 7*]

The Mediterranean Sea should be viewed not as the dividing mark between North and South, but, rather, as that which provides for a common purpose and link. It is a sea rich in the diversity of cultures, religions and socio-economic situations which comprise its bordering States. It provides an opportunity to challenge diversity, not to eradicate it, but to turn such diversity into a tool for further intraregional networks of cooperation and understanding.

Malta is acutely aware of the need to seek and promote peace and stability in this troubled and complex region. We are determined to be proactive in the quest for peace, and determined to enhance the trust needed to act in the best interests of our societies. Since taking office in October last year, my Government has adopted a policy of active site-specific neutrality. Placed as it is at the southern rim of Europe and at the geographic and strategic centre of the Mediterranean, Malta stands by its commitment to the ideals of European integration as well as those of Mediterranean unity. Malta's neutrality is a direct response to the very specific and unique geopolitical factors that currently exist in the surrounding region.

The ultimate objective of Malta's Mediterranean policy is the transformation of the region into a politically stable and economically prosperous demilitarized, nuclear-weapon-free zone. The establishment of such a zone would further build on the international community's desire to further consolidate the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Established on the basis of arrangements unanimously agreed to by all States of the region, such a zone would inevitably contribute to peace and stability in the Mediterranean. This fact was acknowledged by the 1995 NPT Review Conference, when the creation of such zones was encouraged.

Malta would like to see the United Nations dedicate more time and give more attention to the situation in the Mediterranean, through the Department of Political Affairs. In this context, consideration should be given to the establishment of a Mediterranean desk within this Department, a proposal already made by my Prime Minister in his address to the General Assembly. We believe that the creation of such a desk would facilitate contacts and could assume a more direct role in the implementation of the relevant provisions of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on strengthening security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

The varied agenda of this Committee requires a balanced, realistic and pragmatic approach. Both the nuclear and conventional arms agenda items remain our highest priorities. In each of these areas, the international community has endeavoured to build consensus and advance the principles of disarmament and non-proliferation. More needs to be achieved in both fields, not only to negotiate new agreements, but also to achieve universality of existing ones. It is through the universality and implementation of such agreements that the community of nations will collectively demonstrate its commitment to disarmament in the interest of stability, security and a stable peace.

Mr. Saguier Caballero (Paraguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): As Coordinator of the Rio Group for the present year, the delegation of Paraguay has the honour of making this statement on behalf of the Group.

First, allow us to express our congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee, and to assure you and the other members of the Bureau of our fullest cooperation.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the Permanent Representative of Belarus, Mr. Alyaksandr Sychou, for his skilled guidance of this Committee during the last General Assembly session.

The issue of international peace and security is one of the most important items on the agenda of the political coordination meetings held at the inter-American level.

The Declaration adopted at the Eleventh Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group — which took place at Asunción, the capital of Paraguay, on 23 and 24 August last — refers to various aspects of this issue in its paragraphs 40 through 43.

With respect to anti-personnel landmines, the Declaration states the following:

> "Determined to continue to make headway in consolidating the region as an area free of anti-personnel mines, we have agreed to participate actively in the Ottawa process for the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines, and we undertake to work together to make our region the first region free of weapons of this type in the world." [A/52/347, annex I, para. 40]

In keeping with these beliefs, the Rio Group has, through its Heads of State, made it clear that it welcomes the international community's reaction to this question, as evidenced in the results of the Oslo Diplomatic Conference. The Rio Group calls for co-sponsorship of the draft resolution on this issue.

With respect to consultation and confidence-building measures, the Declaration adopted at the Eleventh Summit of the Rio Group states:

> "We express our commitment to implement consultation and confidence-building measures, bearing in mind the need to strengthen political dialogue and cooperation in order to create conditions of greater transparency, stability and security, including a consultation process on the limitation and control of conventional weapons, as recognized in the Santiago Declaration on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, adopted in November 1995." [ibid., para. 42]

That meeting, together with the meeting of experts held at Buenos Aires in 1994, represents an important milestone on the road to creating a more secure region.

Today, Latin America, motivated by a spirit of cooperation, is involved in open processes of integration in various areas. The region is attempting to consolidate peace and security on the basis of respect for international law. The Rio Group therefore supports efforts aimed at concluding, in the short term, negotiations on an inter-American convention to combat the manufacture and illicit trade of firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related materials, and at opening that convention for signature this year.

In another paragraph of the Declaration, the Presidents stated:

> "We consider that Latin America and the Caribbean have an important role in the full and effective enforcement of the instruments regulating the possession, manufacture and transfer of weapons of mass destruction, and we reiterate our firm determination to keep our region free of weapons of this type, and of arms races. [ibid., para. 41]

In line with this Declaration, the Rio Group attaches great importance to the non-proliferation of chemical and biological weapons. Several countries in the region are active participants in the International Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, in keeping with the spirit of the Mendoza Accord, and also in negotiations to provide a verification mechanism for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Tlatelolco Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, an event we commemorate with satisfaction because that legal instrument allowed us to consolidate our region as the first to be free of nuclear weapons.

The international community has acknowledged the extraordinary foresight of the authors of the Tlatelolco Treaty, who responded, in an intelligent and creative manner, to the challenge posed by the danger of nuclear proliferation by drafting an international legal instrument that has become an inspiration and a model for other countries wishing to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones. The Rio Group believes that the objectives of the Treaty of Tlatelolco will have been fully achieved once all the countries in the region have ratified it.

The consolidation of the denuclearization regimes established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco in our region, as well as those created by the Treaties of Rarotonga, Pelindaba, and Bangkok, represents an important contribution to international peace and security. It has also allowed the General Assembly to call for the promotion of the shared objectives stipulated in those treaties, such as the exploration and implementation of means of cooperation,

including the consolidation of the Southern Hemisphere and adjacent areas as a region free of nuclear weapons.

The adoption last year of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was a key component in the process of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We hope that all the necessary conditions will be met for its entry into force.

Nonetheless, several issues are still pending, such as the formalization of an agreement to ban the production and stockpiling of fissile material for military use; the establishment of adequate and legally binding guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States; and the strengthening of existing multilateral safeguard mechanisms. The Rio Group hopes these objectives will be attained very soon.

The Rio Group also believes that the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament is important because it will allow for a review of the international agenda on this subject.

Allow us to conclude by noting that in the light of the results of this year's session of the Disarmament Conference, the Rio Group hopes that the Conference can get back into its habitual rhythm of work, with an agenda that includes both nuclear and conventional disarmament issues and that will allow for the implementation of the historic advisory opinion handed down by the International Court of Justice. In that opinion, the Court unanimously proclaimed the obligation of States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

Mr. Goonetilleke (Sri Lanka): Let me join those who took the floor before me, Sir, to congratulate you on your unanimous election and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in the fulfilment of your responsibilities. Permit me also to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Sychou, who conducted the work of this Committee with great skill during the fifty-first session.

A landmark development this year was the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in April, four years after it was opened for signature in 1993. With 165 signatories at the time of its entry into force, the CWC is well on its way to becoming yet another international convention with universal participation. As a State party which had ratified the convention at an early stage, Sri Lanka is hopeful that the Russian Federation, one of the major declared possessors of chemical weapons, will find it possible to overcome soon the difficulties delaying the process of ratification. With the holding of the first meeting of the States parties to the Convention, we hope that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) will soon be able to address and resolve all outstanding issues to the satisfaction of the States parties.

The countdown to the 2000 Review Conference commenced in April with 148 States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) meeting in New York in the Preparatory Committee. The purpose of the meeting was to consider principles, objectives and ways to promote the full implementation of the Treaty, as well as its universality, and to make recommendations thereon to the Review Conference.

One of the principal objectives of the NPT was to undertake negotiations for nuclear disarmament and for the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date, leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery. It is therefore clear that the Treaty was not an end in itself, and did not in any way legitimize the possession of nuclear weapons by a handful of States for ever. Clearly, the Treaty expected the nuclear arms race to be ended and nuclear disarmament to take place at an early date. However, despite the passage of more than 25 years, we have yet to witness the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

In its decision 2, on "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament", the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference reiterated that an ultimate goal of the Treaty was the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the nuclear-weapon States reaffirmed their commitment to pursuing negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament. This agreement notwithstanding, the position taken by some nuclear-weapon States since the Review and Extension Conference is rather disturbing.

The steps taken in the recent past, including the announcement by the two major nuclear-weapon States on 21 March 1997 of a reduction in their nuclear arsenals, and the signing of a set of arms control agreements in September, have to be acknowledged as positive developments. While admittedly the envisaged reductions are significant from the point of view of those nuclear-weapon States, it has to be pointed out that START II has not yet been ratified by the State Duma of the Russian Federation. Even after that, there will still be thousands of

nuclear warheads in the hands of the two major nuclear-weapon States. This is certainly not a source of comfort to the international community, which has to depend on the goodwill of the nuclear-weapon States, the reliability of aging nuclear warheads and their delivery systems, and the very security of thousands of nuclear weapons.

To make matters worse, some nuclear-weapon States advance the view that negotiations should be conducted between the two major nuclear-weapon States, to be followed by the remaining three when the former's nuclear weapons come down to the hundreds. They have also taken the position that nuclear disarmament should not be subjected to multilateral negotiation, thus attempting to turn the international community into mere spectators. This is in spite of article VI of the Treaty, which provides for each party to the Treaty to pursue negotiations.

These nuclear-weapon States seem to overlook their treaty obligations, the call made by the Eleventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries in 1995, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion of July 1996, the recommendations of the Canberra Commission report of August 1996, and the statement made by 61 retired generals and admirals in December 1996 with regard to nuclear disarmament. Moreover, they seem to ignore that the rationale advanced for retaining nuclear weapons — namely, the theory of nuclear deterrence — is now being rejected by the same persons who embraced it earlier.

Sri Lanka regrets the lack of response to the proposal made by 26 members of the Conference on Disarmament belonging to the Group of 21 on a mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in June 1997 and the proposal for a programme of action for elimination of nuclear weapons submitted by 28 members of the same Group in August 1996.

Furthermore, despite the proposal by the Group of 21 and other delegations for the establishment of an ad hoc committee or even a mechanism to discuss the issue, the Conference on Disarmament has been prevented from commencing work on the subject because of the position held by some delegations that nuclear disarmament is not a subject that can be multilaterally negotiated in the forum available to the international community to negotiate disarmament matters.

Sri Lanka would like to urge these delegations to reassess their positions and permit the Conference on Disarmament to begin consultations leading to the establishment of appropriate mechanisms to deal with nuclear disarmament as well as a fissile material cut-off convention when the Conference begins its 1998 session.

Commencement of work on a fissile material cut-off treaty has been delayed since 1995. While some delegations are of the view that such a treaty should be negotiated on a stand-alone basis, others take the position that work on that subject should take place as an integral part of negotiations for nuclear disarmament. Sri Lanka hopes that the Conference on Disarmament will be able to resolve the matter during its 1998 session by treating both subjects on an equal basis.

An issue as old as the NPT is the demand made by the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty for security assurances. For a quarter of a century the nuclear-weapon States refused to consider security assurances beyond those contained in Security Council resolution 255 (1968). That the resolution had failed to address the concerns of the non-nuclear-weapon States was demonstrated by the fact that nuclear-weapon States themselves deemed it necessary to come up with Security Council resolution 984 (1995) several weeks before the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. However, the statements made during the Review and Extension Conference by the non-nuclear-weapon States and decision 2 of the Conference confirmed the fact that the attempt made by the nuclear-weapon States fell short of the expectations of the non-nuclear-weapon States.

It was in that context that the Conference determined in decision 2 that "further steps should be considered to assure non-nuclear-weapon States party to the Treaty against the use of nuclear weapons". Conceding to the demand made by the non-nuclear-weapon States for decades, it further stated that "these steps could take the form of an internationally legally binding instrument". Despite the decision of the Review and Extension Conference, no steps whatsoever have been taken for more than two years, either in the context of the NPT or in the Conference on Disarmament, to satisfy the justifiable demand of the non-nuclear-weapon States. It was against this background that the States parties belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement and a cross-section of others demanded at the first session of the Preparatory Committee to the NPT this spring that at the next review conference a legally binding security assurances regime be concluded.

There have been several proposals on the issue, ranging from a protocol to the NPT to an international legal instrument to be worked out either within the context of the

NPT or in the Conference on Disarmament. Against this background, to maintain that there is not enough common ground among the key countries on which to base the negotiations of such a treaty, and to oppose the negotiation of a global negative security assurances treaty, or of a negative security assurances protocol to the NPT, is not the way for the nuclear-weapon States to display good faith.

In the circumstances, Sri Lanka is of the view that the Conference on Disarmament should at the outset of its 1998 session take steps to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances, if necessary with a revised mandate, to commence immediate negotiations to satisfy the call made by non-nuclear-weapon States for security assurances. In our opinion, the limited time available to the NPT Review Conference would not be sufficient to negotiate an international instrument of this nature. If a fissile material cut-off treaty can be negotiated by the Conference on Disarmament, there is no reason not to entrust the same negotiating forum with the subject of security assurances.

The most effective way to prevent nuclear war is to eliminate nuclear weapons altogether. In addition to General Assembly resolution 51/46D on a Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons, supported by 114 States, a growing number of non-governmental organizations, too, have voiced their views on the matter. Prominent among these non-governmental organizations is the group known as the Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy, representing international lawyers, scientists and disarmament experts, which has laboured tirelessly and produced a model nuclear weapons convention, demonstrating the fact that civil society also has strong views to express on the matter.

The desire to conclude a convention to ban the use of nuclear weapons is shared universally. More than 100 States belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement called for such action at the Ministerial Meeting held in New Delhi in the spring of 1997. Prior to the Non-Aligned Movement meeting, on March 13, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on its member States to support the commencement of negotiations in 1997 leading to the conclusion of a convention for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

If the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons will take a considerable period of time, it is logical to demand that a convention prohibiting the use of such inhumane weapons of mass destruction be concluded at an early date. This would enable the nuclear-weapon States to address the question of the total elimination of nuclear weapons at a pace comfortable to them.

On the other side of the scale is a wide variety of weapons falling into the category of conventional weapons. Taking into consideration the large number of lives lost and the immense destruction caused by these weapons, the international community should not delay taking steps to minimize the devastating effects of these weapons. We have to bear in mind the fact that small and vulnerable countries can be destabilized by interested parties or groups relying on small arms, light weapons and explosives. My delegation has studied the report of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, contained in document A/52/298, and notes with interest the recommendations set out in paragraphs 79 (e) and 79 (g) on reduction, and in paragraphs 80 (h) and 80 (k) on prevention. We fully support the view expressed in the report that all States and relevant regional and international organizations should intensify their cooperative efforts against all aspects of illicit trafficking. The proposal for an international conference on illicit arms trade merits the serious consideration of all delegations.

The subject of transparency has evoked interest and encouraged debate both in the General Assembly and in the Conference on Disarmament. As we discuss the subject, representatives should be mindful of the fact that the mandate given in General Assembly resolution 46/36 L expired several years ago, that the working group appointed by the General Assembly at its fifty-first session has submitted its report and that substantial debate on the subject has taken place both in New York and in Geneva.

We share the view that transparency cannot be selective. It cannot be limited to conventional weapons alone, ignoring weapons of mass destruction. It cannot focus only on the seven traditional items, leaving aside other weapons that destabilize countries or even entire regions of the world. It also cannot ignore procurement through national production and weapons holdings. Sri Lanka has noted the fact that the Committee of Experts on the review and operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has concluded its work and adopted a report. My delegation regrets that the panel failed to agree on any substantive measures to expand or strengthen the Register. Sri Lanka is ready to support an initiative to request the Conference on Disarmament to reestablish its ad hoc committee on transparency in armaments based on a new mandate taking these concerns into consideration.

The year 1997 can be described as the year of action against anti-personnel landmines, with a number of meetings held in several capitals as follow-up to the Ottawa process. It is heartening to note that close to 100 States were supportive of the Oslo text. In less than two months, the signing ceremony is scheduled to take place in Ottawa, where the ambitious programme for an international agreement banning anti-personnel landmines was initiated almost one year ago.

While the Ottawa process was gathering momentum, there was a long and unproductive debate in the Conference on Disarmament on whether it should or should not play a role on anti-personnel landmines. A number of delegations had fundamental difficulties with the proposal to discuss anti-personnel landmines in the Conference on Disarmament. Some were of the view that anti-personnel landmines should be dealt with under the provisions of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. Others, referring to the fast-moving Ottawa process, expressed the view that there was already a second track on anti-personnel landmines, with no rationale for opening a third track. Some others took the position that it would be inappropriate to introduce the subject in the Conference on Disarmament without awaiting the final outcome of the Ottawa process. The view was also expressed that consideration of anti-personnel landmines belongs in the humanitarian sphere and that an institution such as the Conference on Disarmament, devoted to disarmament, has no role to play on anti-personnel landmines. With such disparate views, there was no prospect of this issue being taken up for negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament in 1997.

In principle, Sri Lanka welcomes the Canadian initiative for a convention banning anti-personnel landmines. We believe, however, that such a measure should take into consideration various aspects, including alternative methods of defence and the use of anti-personnel landmines by irregular forces, insurgents and others. Given our own security concerns, Sri Lanka will regrettably not be in a position to become a party to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction in the immediate future.

The Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Meeting held in New Delhi in April, while reaffirming the importance of international cooperation to ensure peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region, acknowledged the importance of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean continuing informal consultations on the future of the Committee and its work. On the basis of this decision, Sri Lanka, in consultation with members of the Non-Aligned Movement and other members of the Ad Hoc Committee, will present a draft resolution for consideration by the First Committee and the General Assembly.

During previous sessions, we have heard views for and against the reestablishment of an ad hoc committee on prevention of an arms race in outer space. Due to the difficulties faced by the Conference on Disarmament in the past, we have not been able to reach an understanding on the matter. However, towards the end of the 1997 session, the view was expressed that there was no objection in principle to the reestablishment of the ad hoc committee with a revised mandate to undertake work in this sphere. Based on this understanding, my delegation, in consultation with other interested delegations, proposes to introduce a draft resolution with a view to facilitating work by the Conference on Disarmament in 1998.

In conclusion, let me briefly refer to the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament. My delegation is pleased to note the numerous activities conducted by the Kathmandu Centre in the past and during 1997, and wishes to appeal to those countries within and outside the region to continue funding the Centre to enable it to continue its services to the region.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee and to congratulate the other members of the Bureau in advance of their election. We have worked together closely, and I am confident that with your wide experience you will be able to guide our efforts to a successful conclusion. I assure you of my delegation's support and cooperation.

I would like also to recognize the presence among us today of the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky.

This session of the Committee has convened in a political atmosphere that should be properly reflected upon and carefully analyzed in order to serve the interests of the international community in the field of disarmament. This exercise will assist us as we approach an important phase in reforming the work of the Organization both in structure and in substance. I find it pertinent at this stage to emphasize once again the priorities of the international community in the field of disarmament, which should be

observed in any reform process. These priorities were clearly outlined at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, where nuclear disarmament was accorded the highest priority, followed by other weapons of mass destruction, and then by conventional weapons.

The immensely destructive character of nuclear weapons should generate a momentum for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. The attainment of the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is indispensable, and the rationale for that resolve should be self-evident: the mere existence of nuclear weapons constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security. It is therefore ironic that the efforts of the international community have not yielded significant results despite consecutive General Assembly resolutions and references in international legal instruments, most notably, of course, article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, the findings of the Canberra Commission and, last but not least, the determined contributions of non-governmental organizations. A cross-sectoral factor is that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

In this vein Egypt, as coordinator of the Group of 21 in the Conference on Disarmament, submitted in August 1996, on behalf of 28 of its members, a proposal for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons. This programme of action is designed to overcome the lacuna in strong and explicit commitments relating to nuclear disarmament, especially from the nuclear-weapon States. We still believe that this programme should be seriously studied in the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, whose establishment on a priority basis, as a subsidiary body of the Conference on Disarmament, is called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 51/45 O to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament and for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework.

Egypt further proposed in the Conference on Disarmament a possible mandate for the ad hoc committee which takes into account diverse concerns, but clearly the lack of political will remains the major obstacle for any advance in this domain. The proposed mandate of the ad hoc committee encompasses simultaneous work towards the realization of a comprehensive agreement banning the production of fissile material for weapons purposes as envisaged in paragraph 4 (b) of decision 2, on "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament", of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

Special attention should be accorded to achieving the universality of the NPT — the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime — where an obligation exists on each of its parties, according to article VI, to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

We regard the commencement of the preparatory process for the NPT Review Conference in the year 2000 as an important phase in which efforts should be consolidated towards the issuance by the Review Conference of an integral consensus document to enhance the implementation of all NPT provisions and build constructively on the outcome of the 1995 Conference, which consisted of three decisions and the resolution on the Middle East — adopted, it should be recalled, by consensus. Egypt notes with satisfaction that the first session of the Preparatory Committee recommended to the next session the allocation of specific time to be devoted to discussions on ways and means for the implementation of the Middle East resolution, and in this regard we underscore the special responsibility of the sponsors of the resolution in seeing to its full implementation.

Furthermore, the review process should give adequate attention to the questions of nuclear disarmament and security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States with a view to drafting an internationally legally binding instrument on comprehensive security assurances. In this context, we welcome the decision of the first Preparatory Committee to allocate specific time for the consideration of this issue.

Egypt welcomes the establishment of the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. Notwithstanding the shortcomings of the CTBT, which cast a shadow over its true comprehensiveness, we consider it an important, though limited, step in the right direction which should be followed by additional steps toward the goal of nuclear disarmament. However, I would like to register our discontent with recent reports on subcritical tests that run contrary to the contractual as well as the moral obligations under the Treaty and to its spirit. Egypt calls for responsible

attitudes, respecting the letter and spirit of the Treaty, so as not to undermine its value and thereby hinder the ratification process.

Egypt views as very important the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones around the globe. The concept in itself represents a useful tool for the promotion of the non-proliferation regime within the framework of the NPT. It is in this vein that we recently welcomed the culmination of tireless African efforts in the adoption of the Treaty of Pelindaba, signed by the African States in Cairo, establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, and the adoption of the Cairo Declaration, which reflected a number of African positions that bring the world one step closer to attaining the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

With regard to the Middle East region, the General Assembly has been calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East since 1974. Despite the fact that the resolution on this item has been adopted annually by consensus since 1980, the progress achieved towards the attainment of this objective has come from all the States of the region. In this context it has to be noted that all the States members of the League of Arab States have become parties to the NPT as a reflection of their firm belief and conviction that freeing the Middle East from nuclear weapons will certainly bring peace and security to the whole region. At the same time, Israel persists in defying repeated calls to join the NPT and to subject its facilities to full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

Arguments advanced by Israel to justify its position against joining the NPT and against placing all its unsafeguarded nuclear facilities under full-scope IAEA safeguards are now the serious obstacle — the only serious obstacle — that prevents the establishment of the zone, thus undermining efforts towards achieving a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. This attitude from Israel not only prevents the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zone but also induces a similar position on the part of many States in the region with regard to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. The rationale is simple enough: security cannot be divided between various weapons of mass destruction or even between weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons.

The initiative launched in 1990 by President Mubarak to establish a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East carries a lot of weight in this regard. It will be recalled in this context that in paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991) the Security Council endorsed the necessity of establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and, again, this has not been implemented.

The international community, and in particular the United Nations, has a special responsibility for not allowing one State in the region, namely Israel, to benefit from pursuing ambiguous policies in the nuclear field, particularly in view of the recent deteriorating political situation in the Middle East, for which the Israeli Government, and the Israeli Government alone, bears responsibility.

In this spirit, and in order to achieve a world free from nuclear weapons, Egypt will continue to support a draft resolution on the nuclear weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas. We consider that the ultimate objective of the draft resolution on this subject deserves the support of all States, particularly after the amendment of the text by its sponsors to take into consideration the observations expressed last year on this particular issue.

Egypt also supports the initiative launched by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and encourages full United Nations support for this newly born initiative, in the same manner as the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency supported the African States in the formulation of the Treaty of Pelindaba by assisting the Governments of the region and the Governments concerned to settle the remaining policy and technical issues, thus assisting in advancing the cause of nuclear non-proliferation.

The Egyptian Government supports the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a confidence-building mechanism, not — and I repeat, not — as an arms-control mechanism. We share disappointments over the outcome of the meetings of the Panel of Governmental Experts, not only because it failed to broaden the scope of the Register to cover military holdings and procurement through national production, but also — and I believe more importantly — because it failed to include an eighth category on stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction.

In our view, transparency with regard to weapons of mass destruction is as important as transparency with regard to conventional weapons, if not more important, for the same reason of the indivisibility of security. The

international community cannot, for instance, expect the States of the Middle East to ignore the reports on the existence of nuclear weapons in the region and continue to report to the Register on their conventional arms. I shall not speak at length on this point and would merely refer to the consolidated reply presented by the States members of the League of Arab States, as contained in the report of the Secretary-General on this item. Meanwhile, Egypt is considering the possibility of presenting a new draft resolution under agenda item 71 (c), "Transparency in armaments", related to transparency in weapons of mass destruction, in order to highlight the need for a parallel approach that would make transparency complete in all fields of disarmament.

As to small arms and light weapons, the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts constitutes a solid basis for further work, but we should not lose sight of two essential facts: first, the conflicts in areas that have been examined by the Panel did not erupt because of the existence of small arms but, rather, for deep-rooted political and historic reasons; secondly, notwithstanding the attention given to small arms, most notably by the Disarmament Commission and the Panel, the elimination of nuclear weapons should be accorded the utmost priority. Nothing can justify any change in the scale of priorities.

I now turn to the landmines issue. The fact is that Egypt is one of the most heavily mined countries in the world, with over 22.7 million landmines planted in its soil by regional and extraregional belligerents during various international and regional conflicts. In this light, I would like to put on record Egypt's position on how to approach the landmine problem comprehensively. We believe that measures aimed at curbing mines should be accompanied by serious and concrete steps geared towards mine clearance in affected countries that are unable to achieve that objective on their own, by providing technical and financial support and through the transfer of necessary advanced technology to enable these States to overcome this tragic legacy. This is, in our view, essential.

It is also useful here to refer to the Final Document of the Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, held at Geneva in May 1996, which incorporated a paragraph on the role of States involved in the deployment of mines in the process of their clearance, in which the States Parties recognize:

> "the important role that the international community, particularly States involved in the deployment of mines, can play in assisting in mine clearance in affected countries through the provision of necessary maps and information and appropriate technical and material assistance to remove or otherwise render ineffective existing minefields, mines and booby-traps". [CCW/CONF.I/16 (Part I), annex C, eighth preambular paragraph]

That position has been supported by the resolution adopted a few months ago on this particular issue by the Organization of African Unity at Harare.

It is with this in mind that Egypt participated as an observer throughout the Ottawa process. Regrettably, the final Oslo text contains vague provisions on mine clearance and no reference acknowledging the responsibility of States involved in the deployment of mines. In addition, it disregards exceptions related to limited use to accommodate national-security concerns. Egypt therefore, along with many countries, is still studying the treaty and will formulate its position with regard to it and the draft resolution, on the basis of the facts I have mentioned.

From an institutional angle, moreover, the whole Ottawa process also raises serious questions about the role and credibility of the multilateral disarmament machinery as established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Last year Egypt registered its discontent with the procedure by which the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was brought to the attention of the General Assembly. We had hoped that it would not set a precedent. Unfortunately, history is repeating itself today, but in a much more sophisticated fashion.

A pattern seems to be crystallizing, and there exists a need today to redress the situation and to see ways and means to promote disarmament principles, disarmament objectives, disarmament priorities and machinery. This can be done only by convening a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Egypt, while regretting, like many countries, the stalemate in discussions of the matter at the 1997 session of the Disarmament Commission, believes that the General Assembly should agree at this session on a specific date for the convening of the fourth special session on disarmament, after which we would work on formulating its agenda. We still hold the view that 1999 should be the year for the fourth special session, which would serve as a useful

catalyst for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the year 2000.

Before concluding, allow me to congratulate the Secretary-General on his comprehensive programme to reform the whole United Nations system. I find it relevant in this forum to make some salient remarks on the disarmament-related issues at hand.

First, the only consensus document in the field of disarmament is the 1978 Final Document of the first special session devoted to disarmament, which accorded nuclear disarmament the highest priority.

Secondly, there are well-established terms of reference in the field of disarmament which were duly taken into account in formulating various international disarmament instruments and which should continue to govern our approaches in the disarmament field.

Thirdly, some would like to accord higher priority to conventional disarmament, particularly to small arms and light weapons, because they are often used in conflicts on certain continents. Small arms and light weapons have never been the root causes of conflict, but they were and will remain a tool of political influence. This point must be viewed from that angle.

Fourthly, the question of arms regulation is a very important one. Indeed, the United Nations Charter contains reference to the term, but its application was envisaged, at the San Francisco Conference and consequently in the Charter, within the framework of the collective security system called for in Chapter VII. The establishment of such a collective security system remains unfulfilled as of today.

Fifthly, the upgrading of the Centre for Disarmament to a Department is an encouraging step. However, its title, for the reasons I have just explained, should in our view be limited to "Department of Disarmament Affairs", and it should base its work on the priorities and mandates agreed on by Member States. My delegation, along with other non-aligned States, will make its position known when the General Assembly considers item 157, on United Nations reform.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of the continued efforts of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. This collective endeavour must strive towards optimum coordination between the work of the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission in order to complement international efforts in the pursuit of general and complete disarmament, which remains our ultimate goal.

The Chairman: I now call on the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Mr. José Mauricio Bustani.

Mr. Bustani (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons): In 1899, 26 nations attending the First Hague Peace Conference declared a prohibition against the use of poison gas, marking the birth of a dream of a world in which such weapons would be banned forever. Almost 100 years later, on 29 April this year, fulfillment of that dream became a reality with the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is thus an immense privilege and honour for me to be able to speak to the Committee today as the first Director-General of the Convention's implementing body, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and to inform the Committee about the successful launch of the momentous task of eliminating chemical weapons.

Why does the Chemical Weapons Convention hold such promise when previous efforts have been less than successful? The answer lies in its unique qualities. It is the first multilateral treaty to be simultaneously comprehensive, non-discriminatory and verifiable. It is comprehensive in that it aims to eliminate an entire category of weapons of mass destruction within specific predetermined time-frames. It is non-discriminatory in that all States Parties to the Convention, without exception, relinquish the right to engage in any chemical-weapon-related activities. The Convention is verifiable in that it provides for on-site inspections, including short-notice challenge inspections, to clarify and resolve any questions concerning possible non-compliance.

It is therefore evident that the Convention has broken new ground in the history of disarmament and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. Negotiated over more than 20 years, the text of the Convention was adopted by the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva during a time of hope and optimism. The cold war had just ended, and barriers both real and perceived were falling, paving the way for precisely this type of treaty — negotiated on a multilateral basis, as opposed to the bipolar accords with which the world was more familiar. This in part explains its impressive membership for so young a multilateral instrument: 87 States were party to the Convention upon its entry into force. Now, 100 States have ratified or acceded, and a further 67 have signed the

Convention. Thus, in terms of membership, it is now second only to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which, by the way, had only 47 ratifying States as it entered into force.

The Convention is not only evidence of a new era in international relations; it is also an important part of the momentum in the field of disarmament which the world has witnessed over recent years. Successful implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention will be a key component in the further development and strengthening of a nascent broader international regime to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ensure confidence regarding their elimination. The OPCW faces unprecedented challenges as it embarks on the implementation of the Convention. No other international agency of its kind has been constituted with so wide a mandate. I am happy to be able to be here today to say that although these are indeed the early days yet, work is going according to plan and hopes for the future are bright.

Lying at the heart of the Convention is the unique system it creates to verify compliance with its provisions. Essentially, the success of the Convention will depend on the success of the verification regime. I am happy to inform the Committee that solid progress has been registered in the first six months of operations. During the preparatory phase, it had been assumed for budgetary and planning purposes that only three States — the Russian Federation, the United States and one unnamed other — would declare possession of chemical weapons. In fact, seven States have already declared either possession of chemical weapons or the capability to produce them. This list does not include the other declared possessor of chemical weapons, the Russian Federation, which has yet to ratify. Thus, a clearer picture is already emerging about the quantity and locations of chemical-weapon activities, past and present, in the world — an essential step in the process of the eventual elimination of this class of weapon.

The Secretariat continues to receive a steady flow of information from the States parties. As of 30 September, it has received initial declarations from 63 States parties. In addition, other required notifications, such as notification of a State's national authority, points of entry for inspections and standing diplomatic-clearance numbers are also being received. Intended transfers of specified highly toxic chemicals produced in small quantities for protective, medical, pharmaceutical or other peaceful purposes — the so-called Schedule 1 chemicals are also now being declared to the OPCW so that such chemicals can be tracked.

Progress has also been solid as regards the second leg of the Convention's verification system: on-site inspections. The very first OPCW inspection was launched on 4 June 1997, just over a month after entry into force. This took place in the United States at a facility which had been in the process of destroying its stockpiles of chemical weapons at the time the Convention entered into force. Altogether, some 80 initial inspections and visits have been conducted on the territory of 17 States. This includes both chemical-weapon-related facilities and facilities producing Schedule 1 chemicals. The Convention requires that the initial inspection of facilities of this type should be completed within six months of its entry into force, an onerous requirement but, nevertheless, one we aim to achieve before the end of this month. In addition, permanent monitoring of chemical-weapon destruction operations is underway at three chemical-weapon destruction facilities in the United States. More than 100 inspections will be completed before the end of the year.

The OPCW has also been working hard to actively assist States in implementing the Convention nationally. The declaration requirements for States parties, for example, are extremely complex, and some States have experienced difficulties in compiling the requisite information. Nonetheless, as a result of the combined efforts of States parties and the Secretariat, the momentum has been maintained and the situation as regards national compliance with all provisions of the Convention continues to improve.

While the verification system forms the core of the work of the OPCW, there are other important tasks to be undertaken, a critical one being the implementation of article XI of the Convention, on economic and technological development. The intimate relationship between disarmament and non-proliferation commitments, on the one hand, and free trade and cooperation for peaceful purposes, on the other, is reflected in this article, and it is thus essential that the careful balance be preserved as the Convention is implemented. In addition to providing training courses for personnel of national authorities so as to permit them to properly and effectively implement the Convention at a national level, the Secretariat is working on a number of projects and programmes aimed at promoting technical cooperation between States parties.

None of this is to say that we are without challenges. One of the most important is the need to develop a culture of transparency as regards the work of the OPCW. It is true that the Convention itself requires that confidential information be protected, and it is true that it was this

reassurance that allowed such an intrusive verification system to be accepted in the first place. But the preservation of confidential information in the field of the chemical industry needs to be balanced with the need to be as open and transparent as possible about activities in the military field. I have therefore urged all States parties to strive to overcome their traditional reluctance to be open, not only to the OPCW, but also to the outside world, about chemical weapons related matters.

If we are to have any credibility as a body capable of overseeing the elimination of chemical weapons, we must be able to provide information on the Organization's activities and the progress being made in identifying and destroying chemical weapons stockpiles and programmes. Our mandate is to protect confidential information, not to perpetuate secrecy. As Director-General of the OPCW, I have as one of my paramount objectives transcending these difficulties. There are already signs that this is happening. India, for example, publicly declared its chemical weapons related activities while making declarations to the OPCW. Forty-five out of 49 States parties that had submitted their initial declarations. The fact that some of these States have taken these courageous decisions, notwithstanding that they perceive considerable security threats in their respective regions, highlights their commendable long-range vision that only through personal example and truly global action will the Convention be able to achieve its ultimate goal of complete universality. I believe that actions such as these are commendable in their own respect, and contribute towards demonstrating that the Convention is indeed working in a successful manner.

Another fundamental challenge is to promote the universality of the Convention. Already the prognosis is good — four of the five permanent Members of the Security Council are States parties, and the Convention captures the overwhelming majority of the world's chemical industry. Unfortunately, some key States remain outside, and in that regard my utmost priority is to facilitate ratification of the Convention by the Russian Federation. With 40,000 agent tonnes of chemical weapons, the presence of the Russian Federation is essential if the Convention is to fulfil its aim of eliminating chemical weapons in a comprehensive manner. The presence of the Russian Federation in this regime is also important because of its role in the overall global security arena and because it is one of the five permanent Members of the Security Council. Reflecting the importance of its participation, a number of States have offered to assist in the destruction process once Russia is on board.

There is progress. The question of ratification is on the Duma's agenda for this period. I and other senior officials travelled to Moscow last month to discuss the matter with the Russian authorities. I am happy to report that there is a clear desire on the part of the Russian Federation to join this Convention. Given the willingness of other States to assist Russia financially, and the political will which has been demonstrated by the Russian authorities to join the Convention, I am optimistic that a positive vote will occur and that we will see the Russian Federation as a full fledged member of the OPCW by the second session of the Conference of States parties in December.

The OPCW's efforts in this regard will have to be complemented by individual and collective actions by its member States. From among the 67 signatory States, the ratification of the CWC by the Russian Federation will have, by far, the most dramatic impact on the prospects for the Convention's ultimate future success. Russia is currently the largest declared possessor of chemical weapons in the world. It has one of the largest chemical industries, and is a permanent Member of the Security Council and a member of the G-8. My firm conviction is that its ratification of the CWC will pave the way for a number of other ratifications, including those of States neighbouring Russia, which at present are clearly awaiting a political signal from Moscow. The fact that my first official visit as Director-General was to the Russian Federation — still a signatory State, rather than a member State of the OPCW — is a measure of the very highest priority which I attach to early Russian ratification of the CWC.

As the Russian Parliament is finalizing its debate on CWC ratification, the next few days will become the litmus test of whether Russia intends to live up to its leadership role on international security and disarmament issues, or whether it will choose what is, in my view, the dangerous path of isolationism. I firmly believe that the Russian people, through their representatives in Parliament, will make the right choice, and the Convention will be ratified now. This is the only outcome which will be consistent with the pressing requirement for Russia to integrate — both politically and economically — with the rest of the world, and not distance itself from it.

There is no basis whatsoever for questioning Russia's support for the Convention and its belief that the CWC will be instrumental in strengthening Russia's national security. To start with, the signing of the CWC in 1993 would have been impossible without the critical Russian involvement. Chemical weapons are now excluded from the Russian

military doctrine. The Russian leadership, including President Yeltsin himself, has on many occasions confirmed its strong commitment to the CWC. The Russian Parliament on a number of occasions, most recently in April this year, has made important declarations in support of the CWC. The Duma stated, in particular, that it recognizes

> "the great international importance of the CWC ratification by Russia"

and

> "the need to completely exclude the possibility of the use of chemical weapons"

and that it

> "intends to make a contribution to the implementation of the Convention's goals".

The outcome of the ratification debate in Moscow — eagerly awaited around the world — will be, of course, the ultimate test of the validity of these statements.

The Russian Duma has listed four basic concerns which are being weighed in the ratification debate. These were summed up in its address to the first session of the Conference of OPCW States parties in April this year. I have recently written to the leadership of the Russian Parliament setting out my views on each of the four specific topics of concern contained in that important document. I believe they will have been helpful to the members of Parliament in making the right choice in favour of CWC ratification.

First and foremost, is the issue of funding for the destruction of chemical weapons and the related possibility that Russia might not be able to complete the destruction of its chemical weapons on time. Member States of the OPCW are well aware of the need for international assistance for the destruction of the Russian chemical weapons. The United States and many countries in Europe have already announced their offers of help. I believe that — assuming Russia ratifies the CWC — the scope of international assistance will increase, in accordance with the commitments already made, once the Russian chemical weapon destruction programme gets well under way. Some critics contend that international assistance so far has not been sufficient. However, others see it as seedcorn, or as something to provide a jump-start to the destruction project.

I believe it is too early to say whether or not Russia will be able to complete destruction of its chemical weapons stockpile within the time-frames established by the Convention. While one cannot predict the future with certainty, if Russia implements its obligations under the Convention in good faith, and is still prevented from completing destruction of its stockpile for reasons beyond its control, such *force majeure* circumstances will, of course, be taken into account by other member States. It would run counter to the spirit — and in this particular case to the letter — of the CWC to punish a State party which is willing to comply with its obligations under the Convention, but is unable to do so for very specific and objective reasons.

That said, legally speaking, concerns over the costs of destruction are not directly linked to the decision on whether or not Russia should ratify the CWC. Russia has pledged to destroy its chemical weapons anyway. The Parliament recently adopted the federal law on the destruction of chemical weapons, and the President has signed the Decree launching the federal programme for their destruction. Therefore, the destruction of chemical weapons in Russia is already the law of the land. If Russia chooses to destroy its chemical weapons stockpile, it will, being part of the OPCW, most probably enjoy the broadest possible international support and assistance, which it most certainly will not have should it decide to stay outside the CWC.

In the latter case — to comply with its own internal decisions — Russia will have to destroy its chemical weapons on its own and in all likelihood also be subject to economic sanctions under the Convention. The only real budgetary consequence of the decision to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention, therefore, would be the costs of Russia's participation in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). These costs will be modest, especially compared with the advantages of membership, including trade in chemicals.

The second concern mentioned in the Duma's address relates to the burden of the costs of verification of the Russian chemical weapons facilities, which in accordance with Articles IV and V of the Convention have to be borne by Russia. The final decision on which categories of costs would have to be reimbursed by the inspected State party to the OPCW will be made at the second session of the Conference of States Parties, scheduled for 1 to 5 December this year. If Russia becomes OPCW member State by then it will be able to participate fully in the taking of this important decision.

The secretariat of course is mandated to apply the Convention's verification regime in a balanced way in all member States. There can be and will be no discrimination against any country in this regard. Nor will there be procedures particularly favouring one State over another. Furthermore, the OPCW will carry out its verification mission in the most cost-effective way possible, consistent with the requirements of the Convention. If such cost-effective schemes — in particular sequential inspections — are introduced, the amount of reimbursement which Russia will have to pay to the OPCW for verification of its facilities in 1998 — provided the secretariat's assumptions about the number of the relevant Russian facilities are correct and that the destruction schedule has not changed — would be indeed modest, probably on the order of not more than $3 million to $4 million. Depending on the outcome of the decisions to be taken in the near future, hopefully with Russian participation, this amount may be reduced even further. As for the Russian contribution to the regular OPCW budget in 1998, it would most likely not exceed $4 million. All in all, we are talking about an annual total contribution of less than $10 million.

The third concern involves the requirements for conversion of the Russian former chemical weapons production facilities. I indicated to the Russian parliamentary leadership that I believed the real magnitude of this problem had been vastly exaggerated, as Russia seems to have only five former chemical weapons production facilities. Still, any issue deserves to be judged on its own merits.

The very fact that the Convention permits conversion of former chemical weapons production facilities indicates that conversion is viewed as a means to alleviate, not worsen, economic difficulties. This is why the Convention does not require the destruction of standard buildings and standard equipment at such facilities. Only those features of buildings and items of equipment which are characteristic of chemical weapons production facilities and which differ from the prevailing commercial chemical industry standards need to be destroyed. As for the frequency of subsequent inspections of converted facilities, it will be determined solely by the degree of risk the converted facility poses to the purposes of the Convention. The right to re-inspect such facilities cannot and will not be abused by the secretariat. The Convention provides effective means to guard against any such abuse.

One request for conversion from a current State party, which will have to be decided upon in accordance with the Convention at the December session of the Conference, has already been endorsed by the Executive Council. In doing so the Council took into account the economic need to convert the facility in question and to retain standard buildings which formerly housed a chemical weapons production plant. The logic of the Council's decision should allay the Russian concerns about conversion and thus send an important and reassuring signal to Russia.

Finally, Russia, being the largest declared chemical weapons possessor and a country with a sizeable chemical industry, clearly deserves a prominent place in the OPCW. I am convinced that timely ratification of the Convention will provide Russia with ample opportunities to assume a position in the organization commensurate with its status. Timely means now, immediately; otherwise Russian inspectors will not be able to be recruited, Russian nationals will be unable to compete for the remaining vacant posts within the secretariat and, last but not least, Russia will have no place in the decision-making process of the OPCW. Instead it will have to rely on a bilateral arrangements, under conditions which may well not be as advantageous as those established under the Chemical Weapons Convention, in order to be able to assure the international community that the Russian domestic chemical weapon destruction law is being observed.

Russia will not enjoy the benefits of a universal regime under which every member State is treated on equal grounds. I do not see why the Russian Government and the Duma would wish to opt for such an alternative, not even for financial reasons, when the obvious way — offered to them by the international community and the OPCW itself — is immediate ratification. Such action will ensure that Russia is able to continue playing a prominent role in world affairs. I appeal to those who represent the Russian Federation here to send a sincere message back to Moscow now — today, immediately — before my organization is left with no alternative but to give up on the matter of Russian participation in this noble cause.

I also appeal to all States of the OPCW, in particular the major players, to help the Duma to understand the potential gains, both political and financial, of accelerating the ratification process. I ask them to signify once again their preparedness to help alleviate this burden inherited by the present Russian administration and its financial consequences, thus helping to ensure the success of our commitment to a world free of chemical weapons, which is the foundation stone on which our infant organization is built. In doing so those member States will be demonstrating their true commitment to this first truly multilateral disarmament treaty.

Timing is therefore critical. In accordance with the Convention's provisions Russia will become a full member of the OPCW 30 days after it deposits its instrument of ratification of the Convention here in New York with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Therefore, in order to ensure that Russia participates and has the right to vote on all matters during the December session of the Conference, its instrument of ratification should be deposited no later than 31 October, in 15 days.

The successful launch of the OPCW verification regime on one hand, and the Russian ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention on the other, will be the two most important developments in global chemical disarmament in 1997. When both have materialized, the international community will be able to look with more certainty at the prospect of creating a world free of chemical weapons.

There are some other key States whose ratification is also important to the universality of the Convention, and we are doing all in our power to bring them within the fold as soon as possible. With regard to States that have not even signed the Convention, we will continue our efforts to stress the political, economic and technological benefits of joining. As the number of States parties increases, chemical weapons will be progressively delegitimized and, by the same token, political constraints on their development will be substantially reinforced.

I assumed the responsibility of the post of Director-General of the OPCW in the firm belief that the way forward was to promote transparency and open-mindedness and to lead a lean and dynamic organization. My first six months in office have further persuaded me of the importance of this approach. In the coming months, I will work tirelessly to promote and sustain transparency as regards States parties' military activities affected by the Convention. I will also do everything in my power to assist and encourage the Russian Federation to ratify the Convention — an essential step in the Convention's long-term success and viability as a disarmament regime.

There is a great deal of hard work ahead. At this juncture, however, it is appropriate to pause and reflect that the first six months in the life of the Chemical Weapons Convention have shown that a multilateral disarmament agreement can work and in fact is working — something that I assume to be the sincere desire of all countries. This Convention, a first in many respects, is a major boost for similar efforts in other fields of disarmament, and for this we can be justifiably proud.

I thank you, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to report on the progress to date of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which I have the honour to lead.

The Chairman: We have heard the last speaker for this afternoon. A delegation has asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Before I give the floor to delegations wishing to exercise their right of reply, I remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Ri Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I asked for the floor in order to react to the accusation against my country made just now by the South Korean delegate. It is none other than South Korea that has introduced large stocks of nuclear and chemical weapons into South Korea, yet has no real say about these stocks.

The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is a question to be dealt with directly between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPROK) and the United States, in accordance with the Agreed Framework. The Agreed Framework clearly stipulates the provisions that the DPROK and the United States should implement within specified time periods. If the nuclear issue is resolved between the DPROK and the United States of America, other issues, such as the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, will be settled automatically.

As for chemical weapons, my country was the victim of chemical weapons during the Korean War. As an affected country, it knows better than anyone else about the indiscriminate nature of chemical weapons. As for the accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention, that is entirely within the sovereign rights of my country.

My delegation wishes to advise the South Korean delegate to pursue an independent policy, free from dependence on outside forces, and to raise its voice for the withdrawal of outside forces, together with nuclear and chemical weapons as well as landmines.

Mr. Paek (Republic of Korea): Instead of responding point by point to the allegations made by the North Korean delegation, I would simply like to set the record straight by elaborating our position on the DPROK's continuing non-compliance with the safeguards agreement, into which it

freely entered with the International Atomic Energy Agency under the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

We have no doubt that the 1994 Geneva Agreed Framework between the United States and the DPROK if fully implemented could contribute to the ultimate resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue. That is one of the reasons why my Government has continued to play a central role in providing two light-water reactors to North Korea under the auspices of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization.

The point we wish to make here once again is that bilateral arrangements, such as the Agreed Framework, are intended to supplement but not replace, supersede or detract from the global nuclear non-proliferation regime under the NPT. Therefore, North Korea should not attempt to use the Agreed Framework as an excuse for its non-compliance with the multilateral obligations to which all parties to the NPT must adhere.

The South-North Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula goes one step further than the NPT and the Agreed Framework in the level of non-proliferation commitments it contains. North Korea will do a great service to the cause of peace on the Korean peninsula and in northeast Asia if it abides by the solemn commitment that it freely entered into with the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ri Jang Gon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The repeated political rhetoric of South Korea about my country resembles the Korean proverb that a thief shouts, "Stop thief!" It is none other than South Korea that has introduced nuclear weapons into South Korea yet has real say about them. I repeat again, the Korean peninsula nuclear issue is a question that should be dealt with between the DPROK and the United States. South Korea should not attempt to poke its nose into this affair. I advise the South Korean delegate to sit down and see what would happen.

The Chairman: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation to make a statement.

Mr. Berdennikov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): I would like to thank Mr. Bustani for the attention that he found it necessary to pay my country in his statement. I believe that such attention to one country, which has just signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, seems to tell us at least two things. Firstly, that isolation does not threaten us. And secondly, when we become full-fledged participants in the Convention we can expect a similar or even greater degree of attention to our positions from the organization that Mr. Bustani heads.

As for the substance of the question of Russia's participation in the Convention, our position was stated authoritatively in our intervention before this Committee on 14 October. A decision on this matter will be taken — I hope in the very near future — on the basis of our national interests. And we do not view the attention paid to us, as demonstrated by Mr. Bustani, as an attempt to pressure our sovereign decision-making.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.